



Citadel Of Faith Covenant Church

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ALPHA AND OMEGA

A dead church. All of us have at one moment or another experienced what it feels like to be in a dead church. Many who would claim this unfortunate experience will point to what used to be and then compare to what is at the moment. Others who have never experienced what the church used to be like can still notice that there is something missing...LIFE! Well this is where we find ourselves as we turn to chapter three of the book of Revelation. Rev. 3:1 mentions the church of Sardis. Sardis is an ancient city of Lydia, nestled on the mountain, Tmolus. It is said to be the chief city of Asia the Less and the first city in that part of the world to be converted by the preaching of John. (Some say it was one of the first to revolt away from Christianity and one of the first to be laid to ruins, as it is today, without church or ministry.)

As is customary, we see the introduction of who is speaking to the church of Sardis. This time, Jesus refers to Himself as “the one who holds the seven spirits of God and the seven stars.” (Rev. 3:1). This refers to the Holy Spirit and the many gifts which He bestows upon each church and pastor. Jesus gives grace gifts to each pastor and people. He immediately gives them their prognosis...they are dead. But Jesus mentions that they have a reputation for being alive, but they are dead. I Samuel 16:7 speaks of when the new king of Israel was getting ready to be anointed, the prophet was confounded that what he saw didn't look “kingly”. God's response was that man looks at the outward appearance, but God looks at the heart. Well, in this situation, the church looked alive and vibrant, but God saw what it really looked like...dead! So often we spend inordinate amounts of time ensuring that we “look the part”. Yet, all the while, God is looking for the condition of the heart. 2 Timothy 3:5 (read) speaks of having a “form of godliness”, but denying His power. We often make sure we “get ready for church”. That may look like, what are we going to wear? Does my hair look ok, etc. It's important to always give God our best and put our best foot forward. We would never go on a date with someone we cared about and not look our best; we would never work for a job and then not do our best, however, although we should give our best, it's not the external acts or look that makes a person godly or right with God. We can look alive, but in all truthfulness, be dead. This was Sardis. Jesus exclaims two simple yet POWERFUL words, WAKE UP! Rev. 3:2 shouts through time making those things which are dead sit up and take notice. He implores the church of Sardis to awaken! When Jesus gives the charge for something to “wake up”, He enables it to do just that! He then masterfully gives the strategy to how to wake up. I've been in the church all my life and have heard so much religious talk about Change, Turn-it around, and on and on. What often lacks is a clear strategy as to how to do that this is being asked. Well, Jesus does all things well he gives the charge, but the plan. (Goals without process....good luck!)



The plan to wake up is to begin by strengthening what remains and (if left unattended) is about to die. This is a comprehensive plan for all things that are dying in our lives. God says to strengthen what remains. Sometimes we will try to bring life to what is dead. Although all things are possible through Christ who gives us strength, it's critical to know that sometimes we need to make investments with things and people who are willing. Have you ever tried to help someone who did not want your help? They ended up causing more harm than good because they would fight you to remain dead rather than live. This is why Jesus is admonishing the Sardinian church to as my pastor, Rev. Meeks would say, "go with the going crowd". Sometimes the barely alive may not seem as nostalgically exciting as the previous dead, but guess what...they are alive! Find ways to add strength to those who are willing to be the church and take it to the next level in God. Because the church has started dying a quick death, things were not finished. Jesus in verse 2 states that their deeds are not finished. It reminds me of an unfinished room. Tools, unconnected appliances, ..all the right stuff, but just not finished. Many times we have all the right stuff, but not the will and the plan to .finish! Jesus then states in verse three for the church to 1) remember what they have received and heard, 2) hold it fast, and 3) repent. This is yet another clear strategy of how to bring a dying church or believer (of which comprises the church) to life. Remember what God said, then hold on to it, and make the necessary change. I think we see repentance as always turning away from some evil or sinful habit, but turning away from God's plan and Word to you is just as sinful as unforgiveness, drunkenness, or greed. To recognize the wrong and make the adjustment is repentance. This act of repentance will actually cause that which is destined to die to live again. Yet Jesus says if the church does not wake up, He's coming like a thief and one without warning. God is the ultimate steward. He will not allow precious things (the seven spirits and grace gifts) to be squandered on those who have no plan of ever using them. Thus Jesus as a thief, removing that which would allow them to live and letting them die.

The encouragement of Jesus finds its way to verse four when he says that there are a few of you have not spoiled your clothes. This is a picture of holiness. This is not the legalistic holiness of the Judaizers who in the book of Revelation are often referred to as the church of Satan. This is the holiness of the heart. Jesus promises that the church and believer who heeds what He asks will

1. Walk with him (vs. 4)
2. Dressed in White ...holiness
3. Be deemed worthy (justified)

Jesus lets us know this is not just for the Sardinians, but to all who are victorious in Jesus....we shall:

1. Be dressed in white (vs. 5)
2. Never blot out their name from the book of life (eternal security)
3. We will be acknowledged before the Father and His angels by Jesus

He then closes, by let those who have ears let them hear. It is sinful to hear God speak to our hearts to change something that is dying without taking the necessary actions and steps to address it. That change is not always easy, but it's critical that we move when He call us to.

1. Have you been to a "dead church"? Cite examples
2. Have you ever met a dead Christian? How did you know.
3. What do you do when you hear Jesus say, "Wake Up?"
4. What a new way to look at "repentance"?
5. What are we promised if we are responsive and victorious?